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ABSTRACT

Based on the premise that children's natural love for music makes it appropriate to use songs as a motivational vehicle for reading and writing, this paper presents a reading/singing strategy which promotes vocabulary, word recognition, writing, and comprehension skills while providing appreciation of music. The paper briefly discusses the eight steps involved in this strategy: (1) motivate the children so they will eagerly anticipate the lesson; (2) introduce special vocabulary in the song; (3) set a purpose for the children to read/sing the words of the song; (4) read the song's words and sing the song; (5) ask questions pertaining to the song; (6) sing the song again; (7) incorporate skills/strategies into the lesson; and (8) extend/enrich the lesson. The paper then presents four directed singing/reading lesson outlines. one on the song "Peanut Butter," two on the song and book "Love You Forever," and one on "The Orchestra Song." (SR)

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HARMONY IN THE CLASSROOM: USING SONGS TO TEACH READING AND WRITING

Susan Ramp Ridout, Ph.D.

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Harmony in the Classroom: Using Songs to Teach Reading and Writing

by

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Children have a natural love for music and that is why it is appropriate to use music as a motivational vehicle for reading and writing. As far as retention is concerned, it is interesting that children seem to remember words to songs far better than they do to stories; perhaps this is because they associate the words with the melody. But despite the fact that the words may be easy to remember, comprehension must be encouraged as many children (and adults, too) sing songs and never really comprehend the implied messages, sequence of events, etc.

This Reading/Singing strategy is based on the Directed Reading Activity but has been modified to work with songs. The strategy promotes vocabulary, word recognition, writing, and comprehension skills while providing appreciation of music. In addition, the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains are addressed.

There are eight steps involved in the Reading/Singing Strategy:

I. Motivate the children so they will eagerly anticipate the lesson. The motivational aspect of the Reading/Singing

*Ridout, Susan Ramp, and Kyle Ridout. "Sing Your Way to Better Reading." Indiana State Reading Association, Indianapolis, IN, April 1986.

Strategy is important because it gives the children a positive attitude toward the lesson. The motivational step may be as simple or as elaborate as the teacher chooses. One may show a picture or filmstrip, ask a question, or read a story based on the theme of the song. A guest speaker may be invited to speak on the topic about to be covered. Children's prior knowledge should be utilized at this point so a brainstorming (pre-writing/pre-reading)activity would be appropriate.

II. Introduce special vocabulary in the song. The teacher should teach words from the song that may be difficult for children in either pronunciation or meaning. She may choose words that relate to a specific skill or concept that has been introduced or will be introduced in this lesson.

III. Set a purpose for the children to read/sing the words of the song. By setting a purpose, the children will attend to their reading and, hopefully, comprehend what they are reading.

IVa. Read the song's words. Older children may read the words silently while younger children may read orally in small or large groups. (Some teachers prefer skipping IVa.)

IVb. Sing the song. With the teacher leading, the children will sing the song as they carefully follow the written lyrics.

V. Ask questions pertaining to the song. When posing questions, ask literal, interpretive, and critical level questions. Students should skim for answers to promote study skills.

VI. Sing the song again. This is the place in the lesson where the song is practiced and the children who normally have difficulties become more confident with their word attack.

VII. Incorporate skills/strategies into the lesson. Choose one or two skills/strategies on which to work. Choose skills that relate to vocabulary, word attack, or concepts used in the song. Choose activities that require some writing.

VIII. Extend/Enrich the lesson. Sing the song again with psychomotor involvement. Try to incorporate a writing activity at this point.

Directed Reading/Singing Lesson
on "Peanut Butter"

by: Susan Ramp Ridout, Ph.D.

Goal: Children will learn about peanuts while enhancing their writing ability.

Objectives: Upon completion of this lesson, children will use adjectives and adverbs to enhance paragraphs.

Upon..., students will discover new information about peanuts as a product.

Motivation: Enter the room "hawking" peanuts, as if at a ballgame.

Vocabulary/ Introduction: Peanut - Discuss compound words.

Squish - Pantomine squishing a grape/piece of chocolate.

Spread - Pantomine making a sandwich.

Purpose: Listen to see what the singer is doing and the order that things happen in this song.

Singing: Sing "Peanut Butter." Children can fill in the word, "jelly." See song (attached).

Questioning: Choose from the following questions (or make up your own). What was the singer making? What happened first? Second? At the end when the words were hard to understand, what was happening? Why did the person eating need to drink his milk? How do you think the singer felt after he gulped his milk? How could he have avoided needing to gulp his milk?

"Peanut Butter," sung by Paul Strausman, Camels, Cats and Rainbows, Albany: A Gentle Wind, 1982.

Re-singing: Sing the song again and have the students sing along. Use an overhead projector and point to the words, sweeping left to right.

Skills/ Strategies:

1. Do some research on peanuts/peanut butter.
2. Play a game in which students cooperatively answer questions. (See attached sheet by Rebecca Caudill.)
3. Have students create a story entitled, "My life as a peanut," or "Why I like peanut butter." Since this song has some sound words (ie. squish, gulp), discuss how sound words can liven up a story. Have students enhance their stories by adding sound, taste, sight, touch, or smell words.
4. Provide students with a teacher-written paragraph that incorporates spelling words, compound words, or reading vocabulary words. Then have the students enhance their stories by adding sound, taste, sight, touch, or smell words.

Extension: Make peanut butter. Place peanuts, some salt and a small amount of oil in a blender. Blend. Eat on crackers. (Warning: Peanut butter is hard to swallow so caution children to chew well. Many children have choked on peanut butter.)

or

Make peanut butter play dough.

Peanut Butter

Chorus:

Peanut, peanut butter... jelly

Peanut, peanut butter... jelly

First you take the peanuts

And you pick 'em, and you pick 'em,

And you pick 'em, pick 'em, pick 'em.

Chorus. . .

Then you take the grapes

And you squish 'em , and you squish 'em,

And you squish 'em, squish 'em, squish 'em.

Then you take the bread

And you spread it, and you spread it,

And you spread it, spread it, spread it.

Then you take the sandwich

And you eat it, and you eat it,

And you eat it, eat it, eat it.

Chorus... (muffled)

Then you take the milk

And you gulp, and you gulp,

And you gulp, gulp, gulp, gulp, gulp.

"Peanut Butter," sung by Paul Strausman, Camels, Cats and Rainbows, Albany: A Gentle Wind, 1982.

PEANUT PERSONALITY

by: Rebecca Caudill

1. What is the chief purpose for growing peanuts?

2. Where do peanut pods develop -- underground, above ground, on trees?

3. Write at least two other names for the peanut?

4. In the U.S., which individual state produces the most peanuts?

5. The peanut consists of ____% oil?
(20% 50% 70%)

6. What color is the flower that a peanut produces?

7. To what family do peanuts belong?

Directed Reading/Singing Lesson
(for younger Children) on

Love You Forever (Song & Book)

by: Susan Ramp Ridout, Ph.D.

Goal: Students will understand the concept of unconditional love. Students will gain an understanding of problems faced by some elderly people.

Objective: Upon completion of this lesson, children will demonstrate their ability to recognize and use synonyms and contractions. Upon completion of this lesson, students will write a descriptive paragraph about love.

Motivator: Show cover of book. Ask, "What is this child doing?" and "Who would be most likely to love this child forever?"

Vocabulary/ Introduction:

Contractions	Synonyms
I'll	forever
I'm	always
You'll	
	living

Purpose: Ask the children to listen to try to figure out who might be singing this song.

Singing: Sing the four line verse to the children. Put the words to the song on the chalkboard or overhead projector.

Munsch, Robert, Love You Forever (Illustrated by Sheila McGraw), Willowdale, Canada: Firefly Books, 1990.

Questioning: Choose from the following questions (or make up your own).Who could be singing? How do you know? ("My baby" lets the reader know it is the mother singing.) What words in the song mean that her love will never stop? When people are full grown, can they still be someone's baby?

Re-singing: Read the whole book to the children and have students sing the song each time it occurs. (There are also many predictable phrases so the teacher may wish to have students fill in some sentences.)

Skills/ Strategies: Work on contractions and synonyms (as seen in the vocabulary introduction). 1) Ask students to take passages and change contractions into two word derivatives. 2) Ask students to re-write a nursery rhyme or poem about children, mothers, love, or other related theme using synonyms.

Extension: Have children write a paragraph about things mothers do for them that show how much they love them.

Ridout.I: Love.Forever

Directed Reading/Singing Lesson
(for older Children) on

Love You Forever

by: Susan Ramp Ridout, Ph.D.

Goal: Students will understand the concept of unconditional love. Students will gain an understanding of problems faced by some elderly people.

Objective: Upon completion of this lesson, the children will: Demonstrate their ability to determine main ideas and supporting detail by creating a semantic web and writing a short theme describing their views on problems of some elderly people and community efforts to help alleviate such problems.

Motivator: Show a picture of a mischievious child. Get a poster from a bookstore or show the cover of the book.) Discuss various behaviors children have.

OR

Play "Kids" from Bye, Bye Birdie. Following the song ask: "What changes do kids go through? Do mothers and fathers always like the changes? If they don't approve of their child's behavior, do you think they still can love their child?"

Vocabulary/ Introduction: Crawled, Rocked back and forth) Pantomime these words

Munsch, Robert, Love You Forever (Illustrated by Sheila McGraw), Willowdale, Canada: Firefly Books, 1990.

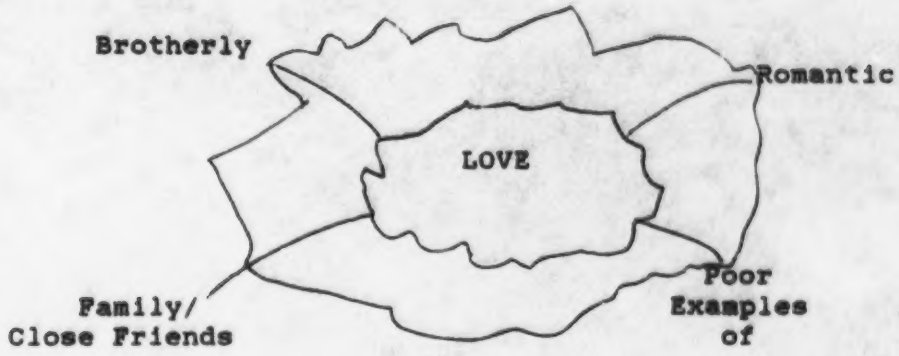
Purpose: Sing the four line verse to the children using the theme of Brahms Lullaby. Have children practice the song. Say, "As I read this book to you, let's see who is lucky enough to have this little song sung to him/her."

Reading/ Singing: Read the book, Love You Forever.

Questioning: Choose from the following questions (or make up your own). How did the mother express her love? When her son was a teenager, what does the author mean when he says, "Sometimes the Mother felt like she was in a Zoo!" When the mother couldn't finish the song, why do you think her son picked up his mother and sang the song to her? Do you think the mother was surprised by this? When the father left his mother's house, what did he do? Do you think this will become a tradition for him? Are all traditions/rituals good?

Re-reading/ Re-singing: Let children re-read the part about being a teenager, because there are especially funny and expressive statements. Re-read the end of the story from the part where he goes to visit his sick mother. Ask some follow-up questions: What was the father's mood? Why do you think he decided to sing the song to his own daughter?

Skills/ Strategies: Make a web with the word "love" in the center. Discuss main ideas and supporting details.



Extension: Choose from the following ideas:

1. This woman was lucky to have a son to call on when she needed help. Some people have no one close by to help them. So... how can our community help the elderly? What ways can each of us help? Why should we help? Again, discuss main ideas and supporting details. Ask students to draft a short description on one of the above topics. Revise, and then share it with an adult. See if the adult has other suggestions. Then revise (again) and edit. Children may share paragraphs with classmates.
2. Students may design a community project to honor or improve the life of the elderly.
3. Students may visit a nursing home.
4. Students may create lullabies using their own words.
5. The teacher and children can discuss Brahms Lullaby, the tune used for the four line verse.

5. (continued)

Research Brahms' life story and locate and listen to other music he composed. Compare and contrast those musical compositions with the lullaby tune used in the book.

Song from, Love You Forever
I'll love you forever.
I'll like you for always.
As long as I'm living
My baby you'll be.

Ridout.I: Love.Forever

5

Directed Reading/Singing Lesson on

"The Orchestra Song"

Grade Level: 3rd - 4th

Goal: To familiarize students with several instruments in an orchestra and to improve concentration by singing in rounds.

Objective: Upon completion of this lesson, the students will:

1. Identify the "families" in which violins, horns, trumpets, clarinets, and drums are a part.
2. Demonstrate the ability to concentrate by properly singing a round.

Procedure:

Motivation: Show large pictures of a violin, horn, trumpet, clarinet and kettle drum set. Ask: "Where would you find these instruments?" (Orchestra)

Vocabulary Introduction: Place these words on word strips:

a. clarinet b. drums c. horn
d. trumpet e. violin

Have children match the vocabulary words with the proper pictures. Discuss the various instrumental families in an orchestra.

Purpose for Reading/Singing: Say, "Listen as each section of the song, 'The Orchestra' by Willy Geisler, is played/sung. See how each instrument is portrayed differently. Please jot some notes as you listen." (Give children a copy of the words.)

*Boardman, Eunice and Andress, Barbara, The Music Book (Level 4) New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1981, pp. 78-79.

Reading/ Singing:	A record is played, the teacher sings, or the children sing while they are reading the music.	
Questioning:	Ask recall questions on sounds each instrument made in the song.	Literal comprehension
	"How were the verses different?" (The composer made the singer portray the different instruments by rhythm, tone, etc.)	Interpretive comprehension
	"Which instrumental family is your favorite? Why?"	Critical comprehension
Re-Singing:	All children should sing each verse twice.	
Skills/ Strategies :	Discuss the woodwinds, strings, percussion, and brass sections. Identify other members of these instrumental families by using reference books available in your library. Create a chart noting categories, similarities, etc. Discuss the term "round." (Remind children of "Row, Row, Row your Boat," if they have sung that song in a round.	
Extension :	Tell students that this song is meant to be sung as a round to portray an orchestra with several instruments playing at once. Assign children to sections and have one child in each section hold up the picture of the instrument group he/she is leading when that group should enter the round. All other children may pretend to "play" the instrument about which they are singing. For a writing activity, children may do one of the following:	

1) they may write a story about being a conductor of a musical group.

2) they may interview someone who plays a musical instrument in an orchestra and write a job description or "news article" about the profession, or

3) they may write a story from an instrument's perspective. (e.g. My life as a violin in the Louisville Orchestra.)